



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – October 25, 2016
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www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

UPCOMING EVENTS

For link to registration info go to: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/?Page=meetlist.html>

Oct. 26, 1-3 pm. Cover Cropping at Foote Brook Farm, Johnson, VT. Hosted by UVM Extension's Vegetable and Berry Program and Tony Lehouillier and family. Foote Brook Farm is a diversified, certified organic produce farm, with over 45 acres and 145 different varieties of organic produce nestled in the valley of Johnson, VT. The farm uses innovative cover cropping practices to sustain and improve soil health such as interseeding cash crops with living mulches and long-term crop rotations to allow for summer cover crops.

Nov. 3. Summit on Health, Agriculture and Rural Economic Development, UVM, Burlington VT. This summit will bring together key stakeholders in Vermont's health, agriculture, tax, government, and Extension sectors to share perspectives and discuss opportunities for collaboration and integration of the spheres of health and agriculture to better serve Vermont's farmers.

Nov. 9-10. Northeast Greenhouse Conference. Holiday Inn, Boxborough, MA. The biennial Northeast Greenhouse Conference & Expo is sponsored by a group of grower representatives from the Northeast, augmented by University and Cooperative Extension staff in each state who specialize in greenhouse crops and management.

Nov. 18, 1-3 pm. Oggun cultivating tractor demo and tour of High Meadows Farm packing facility, Putney, VT. Come see the world's first tractor produced using Open Source Manufacturing, meaning it is assembled from modular, off-the-shelf components. Afterwards there's a tour of Howard Prussack's old barn renovated for comfort and efficiency of winter work.

Jan. 23, 2017 VVBGA Annual Meeting, Fairlee VT. Stay tuned.

Jan. 24, 2017 VVBGA Cover Crop conference, Fairlee, VT. Stay tuned.

Feb. 17-18, 2017. NOFA-VT Winter Conference, Burlington VT. Stay tuned

UPDATE ON VEGETABLE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

With Becky Maden's leadership, the Vegetable Nutrient Management program is gaining momentum with several exciting projects in progress. This past season, eleven vegetable farms generously participated in gathering preliminary data on nitrate availability from legume cover crops. This work will provide the foundation for a two-year trial on four farms beginning next spring with funding from a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture. The aim of this research is to increase the use of legume cover crops for nitrogen fertility in place of phosphorus containing soil amendments (such as composted chicken manure), and to ultimately help growers comply with the state's new water quality regulations (RAPs).

FALL COVER CROP SURVEY

The purpose of this 5-minute survey is to get a better understanding cover cropping practices and information needs of vegetable growers, as part of the Specialty Crop Block Grant project described above. Any information you share will be confidential. Thank you for participating!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/covercrop>

CAPS PROGRAM UPDATE

The VVBGA's Community Accreditation for Produce Safety (CAPS) program is progressing well, coordinated by UVM Extension's Han Estrin. You may know that last year 25 farms piloted this program and lessons learned were used to make CAPS even more user friendly. This year, 87 farms used the CAPS on-line platform to write produce safety plans and 68 of these signed up to document the implementation of their plans and receive accreditation. All documentation is due by today! and almost all farms have uploaded the required materials. Over the next month, each farm's folder will be reviewed, and then farms will be able to make changes or additions if needed. At the end of the year, farms will receive produce safety accreditation from the VVBGA, complete with an electronic 'badge' they can use throughout 2017 on their web site and marketing materials. More info about CAPS will be presented at the VVBGA Annual Meeting on Jan. 23 in Fairlee. Meanwhile, check out the web site

<https://practicalproducesafetyvt.wordpress.com/> and consider signing up for next year's accreditation cycle when the call comes out in late winter.

GREENHOUSE CLEAN-UP NOW FOR NEXT CROP/ NEXT YEAR

Adapted from Tina Smith, UMass Extension and Leanne Pundt, UConn Extension.

It is best to clean greenhouses and tunnels now rather than waiting until just before you start your spring production. This helps eliminate over-wintering sites for pests in unheated greenhouses, especially if the winter is unseasonably warm. Remove all leftover plants, weeds and debris and clean solid floors of spilled soil and organic matter. Check areas around furnaces and alongside walls, and remove those small weeds that are often overlooked. Repair tears in worn weed barriers. If replacing worn weed barriers, do not place gravel on top of the weed mat as it traps spilled media and holds moisture, creating an ideal environment for weeds, diseases, insects and algae. Now is also a good time to correct any drainage problems and low spots in greenhouses.

Biocontrols will not clean up existing, out of control pest populations. However, if a greenhouse is cleaned of weeds, old plants and debris, biocontrols may help prevent pests from overwintering especially during a warm fall. Now is a good time to reflect on the pest problems you had this year and identify biocontrol options for next season or this winter. There is an extensive amount of greenhouse/tunnel IPM information at:

<https://www.uvm.edu/~entlab/Greenhouse%20IPM/UVMGreenhouseIPM.html>

If you are growing winter greens in tunnels here is some information on the use of biological from Cornell Extension on Aphid Management in Winter Tunnel Greens:

http://rvpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/uploads/doc_197.pdf

DON'T MULCH YOUR STRAWBERRIES PREMATURELY

(adapted from Kevin Iungerman, Cornell Extension, Northeastern NY)

Applying mulch prematurely can unwittingly rob your strawberry planting of its maximum edge going into winter. Even though early stage dormancy in strawberries is reached in October, mulching anytime before mid-November can shut down light interception too early, meaning that the plants will have less energy to support their winter acclimation. Since survival over the winter often hinges upon very small differences in energy available to maintain plant health, the negative effects of premature mulching can be quite significant.

The latter part of November is generally recommended as the strawberry mulch window in our area. Defer even later, into early December, if weather conditions allow (no snow and the fields are still amenable to tractors, wagons, and equipment).

Track the progression of ground temperatures, noting when time where soil temperatures are running at 40°F over several consecutive days. You should apply your mulch prior to the ground freezing.

Straw remains the mulching material of choice on strawberries. Wheat, rye, Sudangrass, barley and oat straws work well (and my preference is in the same order). But clean straw is essential! If your primary criterion is the price per bale, then you are inviting trouble! If possible, examine the straw for its grain or weed seed contamination before you buy it, and certainly before you apply it! Don't import headaches that might largely be avoided with just a little extra care. If need be, it is preferable to grow it yourself or to have it contract-grown so that you can closely control or monitor its cutting time. (Cut before the seed is viable!) It is no bargain to use seed-contaminated straw, as you will surely pay for the hidden extras in herbicides, cultivation, labor and headache.

There are plenty of reasons to mulch strawberries adequately. Unprotected strawberry plants are very vulnerable to desiccation from exposure to drying winter winds. Don't skimp. Cold can do considerable mortal damage. Crowns reportedly kill when their plant cells reach temperatures of about 7°F to 10 °F. Raised bed plantings have greater vulnerability as they can be several degrees colder than flat beds because they have greater soil surface area exposed to radiant cooling. In spring you take advantage of the same principle but to reverse effect: greater warming. Consequently, add more straw to raised beds - perhaps twice the amount for adequate coverage (4-5 tons). The same might be done on less hardy cultivars or in windier locations. Remember to maintain a reserve of bales in a dry, freeze-free location so they are available for immediate replacement of straw that blows off during the winter. Monitor coverage often, especially if snow cover is light and it's windy.

TECHNICAL TIPS

Thermostats for agriculture – greenhouse or storage:

<http://blog.uvm.edu/cwcallah/2016/05/03/thermostats-for-agriculture/#more-792>

Finish surfaces for food and processing areas:

<http://blog.uvm.edu/cwcallah/2016/04/29/finish-surfaces-for-produce-and-food-areas/#more-750>

Produce wash sanitizers, with helpful comparison chart:

<https://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/produce-wash-water-sanitizers-chlorine-paa>